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Sen. Allen fights to save school bus safety inspections from governor's ax

LANSING – School children and Michigan's School Bus Safety Inspection program moved one step closer to being protected from the governor's budget ax, announced state Sen. Jason Allen, R-Traverse City.

The Senate passed a revised version of the Michigan State Police budget today that rejects Gov. Jennifer Granholm's proposal to eliminate the program and to repeal the state law requiring school bus inspections.

"Being a father, I was very concerned to learn of the proposal to eliminate this bus safety program," Allen said. "Hundreds of thousands of students are bussed to school every day and we need to make sure that those busses are safe enough to transport our kids. I'm relieved we were able to get the funding for this vital program reinstated."

The governor's 2005-06 budget proposal called for the elimination of the State Police School Bus Inspection program, resulting in a projected savings of \$1.2 million. Additionally, the governor's proposal also called for repealing the state law that requires that school buses be inspected on a regular basis.

The program ensures that every Michigan school bus, more than 17,000 last year alone, is inspected annually by the State Police's expert maintenance crew.

According to a State Police report, approximately 4 percent, or more than 740 of the buses inspected last year, were "yellow tagged" – meaning they were found to have a defect that required repair within 60 days.

Last year, nearly 13 percent, or more than 2,100 buses, were "red tagged" – meaning they had defects so severe they were deemed unsafe to transport students and required immediate repair.

"Parents across the state are counting on buses being safe enough for their children to get to school and back safely," Allen said.

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Without the statewide program, schools that want their buses inspected would have to perform the inspections on their own or find the funds to pay the state to do so.

If the governor's proposal to eliminate the state law mandating the inspections were approved, schools also could chose to not conduct the inspections at all.

The budget bill now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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